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FEBRUARY 10, 2023 | VOLUME 14 | ISSUE 4

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The racialization of Washtenaw  
County's unhoused population.  
**Page 4**



ASK YOUR  
VENDOR:  
**WHAT'S YOUR  
FAVORITE  
SONG?**

# GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Graphic by Agniva Bhaumik,  
Michigan in Color



## GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP



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from the **JOINT DESK** of Michigan in Color and Groundcover News

You might think that a community street newspaper like Groundcover News is the exact opposite of Michigan in Color at The Michigan Daily, the long-standing student-run newspaper of the University of Michigan. But these two publications that seem very different from the outside have more in common than you might think.

Groundcover News was founded in 2010 with the purpose of empowering low- to no-income people of Washtenaw County to transition from “homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.” Groundcover News is grounded in several principles, including the beliefs that “all people have the right to dignity,” “poverty is political — systemic change is necessary,” “building community is essential to social change” and “solutions to poverty must involve people who are directly affected.” As a street paper, Groundcover is sold by people experiencing poverty or



LINDSAY CALKA  
Managing Director



JESSICA KWON  
Former MiC Editor

homelessness as an immediate and dignified means of obtaining income — all while wielding journalism and advocacy to fight poverty from its roots.

Michigan in Color was founded by three women of Color in 2014 as a safe and brave space for people of Color at the University of Michigan to express themselves and their urgent needs. Since its founding, MiC has remained committed to its mission of liberation for people of Color, especially in intersection with other marginalized

identities — liberation which necessitates abolishing oppressive forces like imperialism, capitalism, colonialism, occupation, apartheid and white supremacy, which mutually reinforce one another.

Here at Groundcover News and Michigan in Color, we believe our missions are intertwined. The fight for abolition cannot be separated from the realities of racism and the stark “pileup of inequities” experienced by working class and oppressed peoples. We are committed to publishing work

that challenges traditional ways of knowing — and no, that doesn’t just mean we identify as “alternative” media.

For these reasons, Groundcover and MiC stand in solidarity with each other and proudly present this special collaborative edition. Our intentions for this issue are twofold: first, we want to build connections between the U-M community and the unhoused community of Washtenaw County. Make no mistake: the University of Michigan is a wealthy institution attended by thousands of financially-privileged students. The students and faculty of the U-M community hold social privilege that cannot be understated — but this truth can also muddle the simultaneous reality that there are many working class students who often struggle with feeling alone and invisible in their experiences; first generation,

see **MIC COLLAB** next page ➡

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

CREATING **OPPORTUNITY** AND A **VOICE** FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WHILE TAKING ACTION TO END HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of our regular editions of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for \$2, keeping all income and tips from each sale.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. Our paper is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers.

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ASK YOUR VENDOR

What is your favorite song?

**"Beautiful Eyes" by Glenn Lewis.**  
— Gary Robinson, #224

**"Let it Be" by the Beatles.**  
— Tony Schol, #9

**"I love the Lord He Heard My Cry" by Pastor Danny Hollins.**  
— Lit Kurtz, #159

**"My Ambitionz" by Mozzy.**  
— Derek Allen, #177

**"Haunt Me" by Sade.**  
— Joe Woods, #103

**"Know You Will" by Hillsong UNITED.**  
— Amanda Gale, #573

**"Mainstreet" by Bob Seger.**  
— Fred Allen, #170

**"Gotta Get Mine" by MC Breed.**  
— Brian Hargrove, #158

**The Chinese National Anthem.**  
— James Tennant, #174

**"1980" by Rehab and Steakknife.**  
**It's our song!**  
— Tabitha Ludwig #360 and Sean Almond #561

**Philidelphia sound, Motown.**  
— Schillington Morgan, #148

**"Fireflies" by Owl City.**  
— Tre McAlister, #519

**"Desert Rose" by Sting.**  
— Cindy Gere, #279

**"Goodnight Irene" by Pete Seeger.**  
— Ken Parks, #490

**"Purple Rain" by Prince.**  
— Gary Leverett, #554

Listen for yourself!

Scan the QR code to listen to the "Groundcover News vendor top hits" playlist on Spotify.



Peace, appearances and transforming reality

Peace is a revolution of values that respects the appearances of reality and also respects the reality from which appearances arise. Our most profound context is derived from the truths we hold to be self-evident. Everything is inter-related. Loving kindness and compassion make this interrelated reality a workable situation. It promotes discriminating awareness to make sense of the vast display of appearances.

Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Thich Nhat Hanh are among our 20th century “saints” who pointed the way. As A. J. Muste said, “There is no way to peace, peace is the way.”

The 2023 MLK event by the Chapter 93 branch of Veterans For Peace discussed this revolution of values with a look at MLK’s landmark speech “Beyond Vietnam, A Time to Break Silence.” This outstanding presentation by Bob Krzewinski and Bill Shea will help anyone who hears it begin to mature as a human being for peace. MLK’s eloquent analysis and meditation on reality is the way to begin a genuine education for peace. Only then can we look at our current situation in the context of militarism, racism and materialism — the great sins of “Manifest Destiny” and “American exceptionalism.”

All actions have results. We have a responsibility to look at how those results play out. White



KEN PARKS  
Groundcover vendor No. 490

supremacy is linked to the most dangerous supremacies of imperialism and fascism. How is it that we have avocados year round and avocado-producing countries have a flood of refugees at the border? It is our responsibility to answer the question of young people, “What world system are you supporting?” We hear the refrain “another world is possible!” Breathe peace and go to work on the everyday things that create our lived experience.

This is the work that meetings, vigils and rallies will promote. The heart of the struggle is to be aware of the results of our work. The chain-of-command mentality may not even know who is at the top of the chain. When compliance with instructions is automatic, we can easily carry out orders that are destructive to the common good. A good neighbor may regularly promote the war on nature if compliance requires chemical warfare.

When weeds become the enemy,

There is no way to peace, peace is the way.  
— A.J. Muste

it is mother earth who suffers. When painkillers shut down the causes of pain, we will go from one pain to another and never learn our true condition. When violence becomes the norm, we may focus compulsively on the details of the latest mass killing and not look at the dysfunction that produces violence as a habitual response to suffering.

The suffering we experience can only be cured by looking at causes and context and exercising our creativity. Curiosity is the key. Explore interrelatedness and discover the peace which prevails in the same way that the grass still grows and the birds still sing. We can begin peace by demilitarizing the war machine. Put a flower in the barrel of a gun. Love your enemy enough to risk your life for peace. At least study a wide variety of views that help find the clues to promote love as the best option! Loving your enemy is the most revolutionary value to begin living in peace. Aikido — the way of harmonizing energy — is a state of mind; play with whatever comes your way.

➡ **MIC COLLAB** from last page

low-income students who don’t enjoy the same privileges as their peers, students who have experienced homelessness themselves, students whose dire needs are seldom met by the University.

Our second intention is to raise awareness of the circumstances of the Washtenaw unhoused community, in their own words, and of the ethical responsibilities U-M students, from their positions of relative privilege, have to those unhoused around them — whether it be mutual aid, a Groundcover News purchase, a simple conversation or even just eye contact and a smile.

The more knowledge community members have of Groundcover News, the better the street

paper model works. Groundcover vendors contend with the challenge of the University population’s yearly turnover, especially because they are not allowed to sell on campus. Each year, relationships are made, people move away and are replaced by 7,000-10,000 new residents who have no clue what Groundcover News is — unless, perhaps, they come from another city with a street paper. In sharing print space with each other, we hope to expose future customers and readers to Groundcover News early, and amplify their support of its work, operations and mission.

We hope that this collaboration will inspire you in the U-M community to develop relationships with unhoused people, carry

couple of physical dollar bills on your persons to provide financial aid to those in need and to purchase — and read — Groundcover News as often as you can. We hope you will interact with Groundcover News vendors on the streets, because even when you lack the means to lend them help monetarily, a smile or a conversation can bring them comfort and emotional support. And we hope you will learn something about the topics covered in this collaboration — anti-homeless infrastructure, the Trotter Multicultural Center and the Ann Arbor public school system, to name a few — and think about them, and the lenses through which we view them.



# The racialization of Washtenaw County's unhoused population

**CEDRIC MCCOY**  
MiC Assistant Editor

In the last decade, scholars across academia have begun to investigate the phenomenon of homelessness through contemporary, intersectional lenses. Historically, being unhoused has been understood as being impacted by societal and systemic influences and more often interpreted as resulting from a series of an individual's choices or circumstances. Modern studies have deemed this framework to be objectively false: homelessness is a complex issue that requires multifaceted approaches in order to determine its root causes as well as its catalysts. Vijay Mago et al describe this in "Analyzing the impact of social factors on homelessness: a Fuzzy Cognitive Map approach."

"Homelessness is a complex social problem with a variety of underlying economic and social factors such as poverty, lack of affordable housing, uncertain physical and mental health, addictions, and community and family breakdown. These factors, in varying combinations, contribute to duration, frequency, and type of homelessness... Homelessness is difficult to define, thus governments struggle with uncertainty when creating and implementing policies they hope will effectively manage or eradicate this problem."

The rise in our unhoused populations is problematized further by concurrent factors that act as limiting and oppressive, such as race, gender, ability and immigrant status. This article takes a look at the demographics of Washtenaw County's unhoused population by race in order to demonstrate the dramatic overrepresentation of People of Color in our local homeless community.

In his article "Racialized Homelessness: A Review of Historical and Contemporary Causes of Racial Disparities in Homelessness," Dr. Matthew Z. Fowle describes the narratives that have formed around homelessness in the last half-century:

"Research examining the prevalence of homelessness by race and ethnicity implies that homelessness prior to the 1980s was predominantly experienced by single older White men. However, a broader understanding of the histories of homelessness among Black, Latinx, and Native American people suggests substantial racial overrepresentation has existed for far longer than the past 40 years—in many cases, for centuries."

Fowle goes on to identify the early

manifestations of what would become "homelessness" in the colonization of America. By primarily making connections to the forced migrations of Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans, Fowle crafts a new narrative — one in which the displacement of People of Color in America is understood as a cultural institution that has been operating since the conception of this nation by Europeans. This understanding directly parallels the origins and histories of Washtenaw County and its municipalities. For example, the name "Washtenaw" is an English approximation of the Ojibwe (sometimes "Ojibwa," "Ojibway" or "Chipewewa") word used to describe the land that various peoples inhabited prior to colonization. Not only was this land stolen and its peoples forced elsewhere, but so are its name and cultural significance.

The Detroit metropolitan area became one of the larger centers of trade and commerce in the late 18th-19th century for the early Midwest. Originally colonized by the French, Indigenous peoples were the first to be enslaved and used in the fur trade industry. These Indigenous slaves were the primary labor force of the area, until wealthy French slave owners and their African slaves began to settle in the region soon after. Harvard professor Dr. Tiya Miles describes these early enslavement practices and demographics in her 2017 book "The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits" as well as her U-M Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program Mapping Slavery in Detroit. Immigration to (as well as migrations from) Detroit, located in Wayne County, had a significant impact on the racial demographics of surrounding areas in the coming centuries. By the peak of American industrialization and the subsequent Great Migration in the 20th century, Black Americans as well as Latine and Indigenous peoples began to constitute significant portions of the regional population. Upon the collapses of major American manufacturing industries and factories in the Midwest during the mid-20th century, however, newly immigrated populations lacked the social and economic capital to relocate again; thus, many of these communities have remained a part of the makeup of the region.

People of Color in the state of Michigan in general, but Washtenaw County specifically, are demographically underrepresented in the population

when compared to the national average. Despite this, People of Color are drastically overrepresented in the unhoused population. Since 2005, the Washtenaw County Continuum of Care (CoC) has published its Point-In-Time (PIT) counts of its unhoused population; these reports include county-wide demographics, as well as interpretations of the data and occasionally plans for improving the current findings. The most recent report, completed in January 2022, found that roughly 211 persons in Washtenaw County met the government definition of chronically unhoused on the evening of the count (though in 2020 upwards of 2,800 met the definition of literally unhoused). Of those 211, 43% identified as Black or African American.

While there was a reported decrease in the overall number of unhoused people, as well as a decrease in homelessness for all racial minorities, Black people still represented nearly four times as many unhoused persons as they do people in the general population. Furthermore, the national average of unhoused Black people is 40%; thus in Washtenaw County, Black people specifically are overrepresented in nearly every possible category of homelessness, even in comparison with the rest of the country.

But why is this overrepresentation so dramatic? Let us return to the original remarks from "Analyzing the impact of social factors on homelessness." Empirically, Black-identifying persons suffer from higher rates of mental health disorders (as well as a lack of access to treatment), poverty, inability to build wealth, lack of access to affordable housing and homeownership, among other social factors. To be overrepresented in both the predictive metrics for homelessness as well as the complicating factors makes certain that Black people would be overrepresented in homelessness itself. Beyond being unhoused, exiting homelessness is incredibly difficult for Black people. On this, Teresa Wiltz of Pew Trusts writes: "People of color are more likely to get pushed into homelessness because they are more likely to have a criminal record, which makes it tough to find housing or a job. Or they have a past eviction. Or they have money to pay the rent, but can't afford the security deposit to move into a new place. Perhaps the landlord doesn't accept housing vouchers."

Historically, housing injustice in Washtenaw county has been fueled by

discriminatory housing practices. Racially restrictive homeownership clauses in its most populous cities (that still exist in many current home deeds), such as in Ann Arbor, document the inaccessibility of housing to Washtenaw's Black residents. Washtenaw also faces a significant opportunity gap in terms of employment and education for its Black residents, stunting upward mobility. Pair this with the state of Michigan's eviction crisis in a country where Black people — specifically Black Women — are disproportionately affected by eviction, and the causes of the racialization of Washtenaw's unhoused population become clear.

Thus, Black people are notably more likely to be unhoused and stay unhoused, especially in Washtenaw County. This isn't some new discovery, unfortunately: MLive reported on the racial disparity found in the CoC's reporting in 2017, and in 2018, Washtenaw's own CoC identified the racial disparity in their reporting and published its assessment of its data collection methodologies in order to ensure that the overrepresentation was not in error; and though not specifically focused on the racial disparity, The Michigan Daily reported on Ann Arbor's homelessness crisis in 2020 and 2021.

Ultimately, the racialization of Washtenaw's homeless crisis is one made by and sustained by intersecting systems of oppression aligning to target (both directly and indirectly) the Black population. The continued lack of access to recovery and transition programs, as well as housing, stems from public lawmakers and representatives not allocating funding and personnel to the issue. Within the greater context of a capitalist framework, homelessness should be understood as an inherent characteristic rather than a side effect of our society.

There are some steps we can take in our own communities to help reduce the impacts of homelessness for our unhoused population: volunteering at shelters and resource centers, engaging in mutual aid and using our voting power to demand our representatives amend legislation that will otherwise continue to harm our unhoused. In the meantime, we can also lean into compassion and understanding, and care for each other in every moment possible. Housing inequity is caused by the ruling class's systems, but the solution can only come from our community.

## Movie night

**ANONYMOUS**  
MiC contributor

I don't wish I had never been homeless. How else would I have developed my impeccable Scottish accent? Or how to make cheese and off-brand Ritz crackers feel gourmet? Or how that the back door in the local library never got locked so you could sneak in to use Wi-Fi even in the dead of winter?

That being said, waking up the morning of your 16th birthday to put on a wrinkled, hand-washed AP Environmental Science t-shirt you got for free is not ideal. Neither is the cold.

"Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End" is why I have such a good Scottish accent, by the way. I snuck back to my house (not my house) after school one day and squatted in the backyard with the clunky old laptop I had borrowed from an uncle. I connected to the Wi-Fi and held the Dell out of the snow for the 23 minutes and 16 seconds it took to download the movie. That night, I told my younger siblings, "Now we have a movie we can watch without the internet, how fun!"

In "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End," the squid-faced pirate (Davy Jones, apparently) spoke in a Scottish accent. I brazenly mimicked that same inflection to make my family laugh. Every time we'd watch the scene with the hordes of crabs running around every which way, I'd take in a deep breath and, channeling every single one of my Scottish ancestors (of which there are none), yell out accented,

improvised dialogue. I'd shout, "What have you done to my brethren!" as they scuttled about my warped screen, rolling my r's like any self-respecting Scotsman. My siblings would collapse in heaps of giggles, sprawled out in glee. I'd pull the shared blanket back over them to conserve heat. I cannot count how many times I've seen that movie.

I was homeless and it's fine because it happened but also it's not fine because what did we do to deserve that? Why did that have to happen to us? Why does that have to happen to anyone? In what world is that an acceptable reality?

After some time, your brain starts to warp your perception of reality to reconcile the cognitive dissonance brought on by the whole situation. The human brain is made deeply uncomfortable by conflicting information. "I was homeless," you reason, "because I deserved to be. I must be a truly terrible person deep down inside. I believe I have good intentions but that must be my deceptive evil subconscious, so evil that it lies even to me. I must be a bad person and that is my explanation and now I move on with my life knowing I am, at the end of the day, no good at all. It all makes sense."

If you believe you are a bad person for long enough, you become one. There is no use in not stealing, telling the truth or sharing a smile because you are constantly told that you are fundamentally bad and will be treated as such. Engaging in bad behavior is not just a possibility but an eventuality. So of

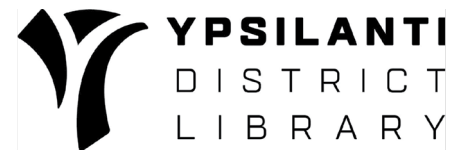
course you stole that pen. You are bad and that is what bad people do. It's what you always would have done even if you want to be good because, at the end of the day, your true nature will always win out. A bad person has no business trying to be good because they will always be bad. Being good is a fruitless effort. You will always be bad because it's the only thing that makes sense. Such is the nature of self-fulfilling prophecy.

I was never able to fully convince myself of my badness. My intentions are good and my actions minimize harm and I would rather not hand all my agency to a self-fulfilling prophecy like that.

Some classmates make me wish I was bad, though. The righteous anger of a good person just isn't enough for someone who claims "poor people don't work hard enough," while their parents pay their tuition and connect them to cushy internship opportunities. I want to tell them working three jobs isn't laziness and that existing in poverty is costly and time-consuming, racking up more expenses than any well-off person could ever imagine having to deal with. There are no bootstraps to pull yourself up by when the world is designed to make you fail.

It's fine most times but some days I think I should kick everyone's walls in and see how they like it.

Sometimes I wish I had never been homeless. If only to rewatch "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End".



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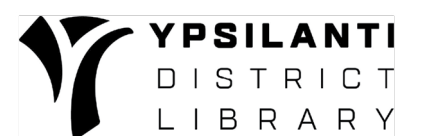


### FEATURED EVENT

**GREAT MIGRATION: REFLECTIONS OF THE PAST IN ANTICIPATION OF THE FUTURE**

Feb. 25 | 1-3pm | Whittaker

Learn about the exodus of more than 6 million African Americans from the deep South to the North, Midwest, and West Coast between 1910-1970. Learn about the A.P. Marshall African American Oral History Project, and older adults ask youth about what they learned from the exercise.





# Examining Ann Arbor's hostile and hospitality architecture

**SAARTHAK JOHRI**  
MiC columnist

If you've ever taken a long walk through Ann Arbor, you might note that for a relatively walkable city, benches are somewhat rare. They're a bit more common at bus stops, but there's usually something a bit odd about them. A bar is affixed — usually welded on so removal is impossible — to the bench, dividing it into sections. It's often cylindrical, making it difficult to use as an armrest. Smaller benches are made impossible to sit in for plus-size individuals and the overall lack of benches makes it harder for those with chronic pain or fatigue to traverse the city on foot. So the question arises: Why are they built this way?

This bench division is a long-standing practice of hostile architecture, which makes cities less hospitable for those mentioned above. But that very hostility is intended toward one of the most vulnerable populations — the unhoused. Bars that divvy up benches make it more difficult for unhoused people to use them to sleep. Hostile architecture to prevent the repose of the unhoused manifests itself in many other ways all over the world: several sharp stones placed inside structures, spikes on the ground under the pretense of modern art, benches that are fixed to tilt forward, the lack of access to public bathrooms, loud noise blaring through the speakers of local businesses — Ann Arbor being especially complicit in those last few.

If you've ever taken a walk through downtown — especially in the winter — you might notice that many restaurants have built small huts, igloos and heated patios for diners to eat in. This hospitality architecture heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, when restaurateurs had to figure out how to serve patrons under quarantine regulations in the cold of winter, even with the risk of fire to their building. Even after things warmed up and patrons began getting vaccinated, local businesses kept this practice, for the sheer novelty of the customer

experience. And isn't that just a little odd? These restaurants were able to acquire permits and quickly build small, heated housing in the streets of Ann Arbor for the purposes of the profits they brought in; to use the words of the Michigan General Defense Committee, it seems tents on the streets are fine as long as there aren't any unhoused individuals in them.

Now, let me be clear — this is not a condemnation of our local businesses doing whatever they can to survive — but our unhoused population is doing

exactly that to a much more severe degree. What we should call into question is our city's priorities and how we think about the architecture they form. Ann Arbor isn't as extreme an offender in blatantly hostile structures as some other cities. What's still striking about these choices is that so much thought is placed into making a city hostile to the unhoused rather than addressing its own housing issues.

If you've taken a walk anywhere

see **HOSTILE** page 11 ➡



Illustration by Maya Sheth, Michigan in Color

# Boober and public benches offer respite from weariness and weather

First of all, I want to talk about public benches. They are very helpful to people with disabilities and elderly people. They are very much needed. I think they need to be on every street and by every business. I think they make the community look good. They are good for vendors who sell things.

They are good for vendors who sell things who have disabilities and who are elderly. They are also good for anyone else who is just tired from being on their feet all day in rough weather. I hope they put more public benches in the community.

I use public benches everywhere I



**DENISE SHEARER**  
Groundcover vendor No. 485

go if they're there. I use public benches for waiting for the bus or sitting in the park or just resting by a

library. Everywhere that I go I would like to have a public bench or public chair because there's people with disabilities, including me, whose feet don't always do what I want them to do. I appreciate the public benches that are painted pretty colors and the benches that are dedicated to a loved one by someone who loved them.

Boober pedicabs are very much needed and appreciated too. I think people who provide rides with Boober are offering a very needed service and I really admire them. They make me happy. Riding on Boober is very comforting. Riding on Boober is also a

relief from trying to walk on ice and snow. Riding on Boober is a relief when your legs and feet are tired.

Boober is not only a needed service in winter weather but in hot, summer weather, too. I think it's a relaxing ride with or without the driver playing music. I have taken Boober for a short ride and a long ride — you can do both with Boober! Riding on Boober is very comfortable and relaxing. Boober gives a kind of service that makes me feel there are still people in the world who care.

# Truth or lies: The unexpected valentine

"Good morning! You are currently rocking with K-M Vibes of Manhattan, New York City, the station that plays all your favorite hits. DJ Chopper is the greatest, chopping out hits from old to new ..."

Jack Harloway, aka DJ Chopper, was a popular, up-and-coming disc jockey. Chopper had won a five-year radio apprenticeship during his last year in college at Musicland University. All during school he never participated in any programs or dances, uncomfortable that everyone teased him about the birthmark on his face. It spanned from the middle of his eyebrows, curving around his eyes and ending at the tip of his nose, shaped like a heart. He did ask Ashley Blake to the prom in high school; however, she shut him down, criticizing the birthmark. He had a crush on his science partner Daphne Pager in college, but he never acted on his feelings. However, he never gave up on his DJ career and was ecstatic about his position at the local radio station.

It was his third year working at the station and he was now working the morning shift. This position was very important to all his co-workers; everyone wanted the morning shift except Chopper. He knew the position



**FELICIA WILBERT**  
Groundcover vendor No. 234

came with a lot of public association and appearances. His co-worker "DJ Head" was a confident handsome man, popular with the ladies. DJ Head often teased Chopper on and off the radio about talking to the ladies ...

"Good day ladies, its DJ Head the smooth operator — 'smooth with the ladies playing the smooth sounds of love' — unlike Chopper, who's always chopping up your smoothness with his uncouth sense for love."

It was Chopper's turn to speak. "Once again Chopper fans, hop on to this beat." He played LL Cool J's "I Need Love."

Being a shy man, the evening shift was perfect for Chopper: he could express himself without being seen. Unfortunately for him, Valentine's Day



Illustration by Amy Deng, Michigan in Color

was the next holiday on the schedule. The holiday he hated the most. He often remembered that the only valentine he ever received in school read "Be my Valentine, Scarface. Sike!"

The station decided to hold an auction at the state fair auditorium to raise money for muscular dystrophy. The winner would receive a free movie and dinner date with their favorite DJ. He was worried that once the winner saw the birthmark on his face they would be appalled. DJ Head was an arrogant man, talking about the auction and

how the ladies were going to come out and bid for him. On the other hand, Chopper was totally shy, trying to avoid his questions about who was going to bid on him. He wanted to opt out of the auction; however it was mandatory that each DJ participate.

One morning two weeks before the auction, Chopper had had enough abuse from his co-worker and he just told his story on the radio. He expressed his dislike of Valentine's Day due to the

see **DJ CHOPPER** page 11 ➡

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**DERRICK JACKSON**  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
WASHTENAW COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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# My struggle with education

**MIKE JONES**  
Groundcover vendor No. 113

Throughout my life I struggled with school. I got my education through the Ann Arbor School District. I attended Bach Elementary School, Slauson Middle School and Pioneer High School.

As a young lad I first attended Mack Elementary School. Mack Elementary had a predominantly Black student body; it was where all my neighborhood friends went to school. One week into the start of my schooling, Ann Arbor Public Schools relocated me to Bach Elementary because I lived on Ashley Street between Kingsley Street and Miller Avenue. I was outside the district and had to attend Bach Elementary, which had a predominantly white student body.

Every year in elementary school, at the end of the school year, I would have a one-on-one talk with the teacher about my disruptive behavior. I was simply moving to the next grade because I was too big, he explained, and he was not going to let me disrupt next year's class.

In the fifth or sixth grade the principal of Bach Elementary, my teacher and my grandmother had an Individualized Education Program meeting concerning my disruptive behavior. In that meeting they decided to put me in special education for the emotionally impaired. I was sent to Thurston Elementary School.

Mr. Lee was the teacher and Judy was the assistant teacher. In special education class they required two teachers per classroom. Besides Mr. Lee, in special ed. the teachers were called by their first names. The first thing I noticed was that the educational curriculum was more reflective of third-grade education. I noticed this throughout the special education system as a whole — even in middle school and high school the educational material was kept at a third- to fourth-grade level.

They tended to deal with behavioral issues more than actually educating the students. For example, every day in school, the teacher, the assistant and the students would have two group meetings per day to discuss behavioral issues. The teacher and the assistant would basically engage in conversation with the students that would end with a student (or students) being put on timeout where the student would sit in a corner in a study carrel. If the disruptive behavior continued, then the student would be sent to the blue room. The blue room was just that: a blue room with five divided sections for disruptive students to sit in for 15 minutes.

My favorite staff member was a big Black guy, named Big Mike, who ran the blue room. Let's say the student doesn't want to and refuses to go to the blue room; then the teacher and staff (Big Mike) would gang up and restrain the student until he submitted or calmed down. I was never restrained during the time I was in special education.

Middle school was the worst. By this time, I'd earned my way back to general schooling. I lived in Principal Michael's office at Slauson Middle School.

It got so bad they decided to put me back in special ed. After another IEP meeting they sent me to Pleasant Lake School, which was located out in the country (the boondocks). Then Pleasant Lake relocated to Ann Arbor's Lakewood School. A lot was learned there. This was when I started my journey in rational thinking. I hated everything about special ed: no girls in class; when we walked down the school hallways they made us line up in a single-file line; we had to ride the short bus with other students with severe disabilities to school.

I felt deep inside myself I needed to get out of that place. I wanted to be like all the other students in general school. I made up my mind that I would get out of special ed. and back into general school. My problem was that I wanted to argue with teachers and staff. I learned the power of rational thought. Being emotionally impaired means you have a tendency to not think rationally and allow emotion to dictate behavior. Eventually, I learned the philosophy of "if you can't beat them, join them." I learned how to have proper dialogue with them and soon I was back in general school again.

It was a long process in order to get back into general school. It was called the "step system." There were five steps to complete. They used a point system; every class the teacher would give points on your behavior in class and you had to get so many points a day. The student had a sheet of paper to keep track of his points.

Step one, the sheet of paper was pink. If you were well-behaved that week you would get rewarded; it was called honor roll and progress. The students that got enough points for good behavior got to watch a movie and eat cheese popcorn. A teacher named Gary used to make the best cheese popcorn. Two weeks of good behavior then you move to step two.

Step two, the student would get a blue sheet of paper to keep a record of points. It took three weeks to move to step three. Step three was a yellow sheet of paper. It took four weeks to move to step four. Step four was a green sheet of paper. The final step — a purple sheet



**Jones studying at the Washtenaw Community College student building.** Photo submitted.

of paper. After this step you are allowed to re-enter general public school part-time for a semester. If you behaved and continued on the right path, the next semester you could re-enter general public schools full-time.

In 1988, at the tender age of 15 years old, I started high school at Pioneer. That year, Pioneer hired a Black principal, Dr. Jones. Students in this era produced no-nonsense principals like Dr. Jones. I am going to make it plain for you: in one week's time, a lot of Black students got kicked out of high school forever, including myself. I'm not going to lie; the people that got kicked out of school were involved in gangs and street activities.

This is when alternative schooling came into effect. Many students who were having problems in general high school and were no longer allowed to attend "forever" had a choice to continue high school courses in order to graduate or obtain a G.E.D. certificate from alternative schools. In the Ann Arbor area, students like myself went to Stone School. Most students continued taking high school courses at Stone School in order to graduate but I decided to get the G.E.D. certificate instead.

General Education Development signifies that you have an equivalent level of knowledge compared to a high school graduate, without actually having graduated high school. I felt that I had no other choice because I was so far behind in high school credits. It only made sense to get my G.E.D. The G.E.D. test consists of four tests: English, math, social studies and science. It took me a semester to complete. I did well on English and social studies but struggled a little on math and science. I still passed all four tests on the first try. I felt a sense of accomplishment.

As time went on, I lingered around at my grandparents' house smoking weed, listening to Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre and being constantly reminded by the commercials on TV that "this is your brain on drugs" or "a mind is a terrible thing to waste" and finally this

one: "you are never too old to go back to school." I struggled, but came up with the conclusion to go to college.

Needless to say, my struggles continued as I attended my first year at Washtenaw Community College in 1994.

The first thing I learned about college is that it's like a full-time job. It requires a lot of time and effort. I wanted to be a doctor as a youngster, so I took a medical terminology class. I dropped that class because I felt discouraged; it was like learning another language and I was taking a full class load and got overwhelmed and dropped out completely.

Returned back to WCC in 1996. I took a computer application class in Microsoft Excel, and got a B grade. I also passed a basic writing class in 2009. As adult life started taking its toll on me as far as being married, raising a family and all the other life challenges, I decided to put schooling on the back burner.

I became a cab driver and drove Blue Cab for nearly 15 years where I serviced the Washtenaw County area. I drove University of Michigan students to all the nightclubs — Scorekeepers (Skeeps), Good Time Charley's and Rick's — and back and forth to the airport. Those were the good-ol-days of cab driving. Thanks to Uber and Lyft, I am now a retired cab driver with a new occupation, writing and selling Groundcover newspapers. Now that my daughter is all grown up and is an army nurse and my son is in high school, I feel this is the time to go back to school to further my education.

In the winter 2023 semester, I'm taking an English class toward my Journalism Associate's degree and Music Production and Audio Engineering certificate. Music runs in my blood. I'm a lifetime musician. In my youth I played the bass guitar and piano. In 2012, I started a music group called Get-Cha-Mind Right Crew. GCMRC is a crew of emcees and artists in the wilderness of North America striving to have their

see **EDUCATION** page 12 ➡

# William Trotter Center: legacy of Black student activists' vision of a multiracial University of Michigan

In the 1960s, young Americans, especially college students, found themselves in revolt. Activism to change the world was in full force. There was agitation for women's liberation, including reproductive rights. There was crusading to protect the environment and save the planet. There was activism for educational diversity, equity and inclusion. And of course, there was a major civil rights movement to end racial injustice, social injustice, economic injustice, healthcare disparities, racism, poverty, militarism, discrimination and inequality.

With Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership and the involvement of millions of "ordinary" people, Congress passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The following year, in 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act. Both were signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. In 1967, President Johnson came up with a non-discrimination executive order; it created a national office for affirmative action compliance. The key goal of this executive order was to encourage colleges, K-12 schools, state governments, local governments and businesses to take serious actions to recruit, train and retain people of Color. The federal government wanted any organization that was getting government contracts to help promote diversity, equity and inclusion in America. The Civil Rights Movement pushed for a multiracial democracy and Johnson's administration used the compliance power of the federal government to ensure more multicolored and multi-cultural college campuses and workplaces.

The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in Memphis, on April 4, 1968 was an earthquake that shook the moral conscience of our nation. It led to riots and profound demonstrations in most of the major cities and towns. There was sadness everywhere. Dr. King's death led to increased activism by Black students and their multiracial allies. Those activists did sit-ins, protests, and even occupied buildings which housed university presidents and other administrators. There was always a list of demands.

At the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, students demanded more students of Color be admitted, more faculty and staff of Color be hired, that a building be designated as a U-M multicultural center and that a Center for Afro-American and African Studies be established. The implementation of the above demands, among others, was gradual, and some have yet to be



**WILL SHAKESPEARE**  
Groundcover vendor No. 258

met. In the early 1970s, the William Monroe Trotter Multicultural Center was first established off-campus at the corner of Washtenaw Avenue and South University Street. The University community of students, administrators, faculty, staff and alumni were happy to see the recent relocation to a more central campus location.

## Trotter's legacy

William Monroe Trotter was an African-American journalist, civil rights activist and real-estate businessman in Boston. He was born on April 7, 1872 in Chillicothe, Ohio and died April 7, 1934 in Boston. After Trotter graduated Phi Beta Kappa with distinction from Harvard University, he founded and edited The Guardian, a progressive newspaper that was published in the building that had previously housed an abolitionist newspaper, The Liberator.

During the early 20th Century, Trotter helped W.E.B. Du Bois and other civil rights activists organize a group to achieve racial equality: the Niagara Movement. That effort led to the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Trotter was a fearless activist. He challenged the pragmatic views of Booker T. Washington in 1903 and was arrested for heckling Washington at the AME African-American Church in Boston. He pushed back against presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson on questions of racial inequality, segregation and discrimination.

In 1919, against the wishes of the U.S. government, Trotter was named a delegate to the National Equal Rights League at the Paris Peace Conference.

## Related to Sally Hemings

William Monroe Trotter's father, James Trotter, was born a slave in Mississippi. James's father was a white slave owner of James's mother, Letitia;



**William Monroe Trotter Multicultural Center is located on State Street.** Photo credit: Jessica Kwon.

she and her children were set free by their master after their owner married. Letitia and her mixed-race children (including James) were sent to Cincinnati, Ohio, a northern state with a supportive community for free Black people.

Young James Trotter fought on the Union side during the Civil War and was promoted to lieutenant in the famous 55th Massachusetts Regiment.

Trotter's mother was Virginia Isaacs. Like William's father, she was a Black American of mixed race said to have been born free. Her mother was born a slave and lived at Monticello, the primary slave plantation of America's third president, Thomas Jefferson.

Virginia Isaacs' mother was Ann Elizabeth Fossett. She was the great-granddaughter of Elizabeth "Betty" Heming, a slave who gave birth to six children by owner John Wayles, including Sally Hemings, who all

looked white but were born into slavery.

## Conclusion

As Ann Arbor welcomes the Multicultural Center to its new central campus location, let us remember that shared values of many at the University of Michigan — activism, social justice, excellence, civic engagement and community engagement — are part and parcel of William Monroe Trotter's legacy. There is so much that has changed since the 1960s and 1970s. Some challenges remain. But to have a "Michigan in Color" is to have a "Gorgeous Mosaic." Dr. King's dream shall never die. His hopes for pluralism, diversity and inclusion still live. On this campus, the difference is beautiful.

*This article was originally published in Groundcover News in May 2019.*

## Homeless Awareness Group

**Mondays, January 23**  
**-February 27**  
**7pm**

**YDL-MICHIGAN**

**QUESTIONS?**

**734-482-4110 x 2421**

*This group meets weekly to focus on the homeless crisis in our community. We will have discussions, readings, and activities to raise awareness of the complexities of living without stable housing. Opportunities will be available for participants to engage in activities designed to help individuals experiencing homelessness. Program will be led by Lit Kurtz, former educator and experienced homeless resident who is passionate about bringing awareness of the homelessness crisis in her community.*





Photography by Akash Dewan,  
Michigan in Color

# Stop ignoring homeless people on State Street

**ANCHAL MALH**  
**MiC contributor**

If you ever find yourself at the University of Michigan, chances are you'll take a trip down State Street. During the early evening hours after the last classes for the day have ended, State Street comes alive. Many of the local campus eateries, shopping and living complexes are centrally located there. Although it is a hub for college students and located in the heart of one of the country's best college towns, Ann Arbor is still a city where individuals and families with no association with the University reside.

Recognized as the third best public university in the nation, it is no surprise to University of Michigan students and associated employees that the cost of living in downtown Ann Arbor and its surrounding neighborhoods is high. The level of prestige, elite status and innovative research tied to the Michigan name alludes to an exclusive lifestyle attainable by the average student on campus. It's important to acknowledge that the average U-M student most likely doesn't have an issue with meeting housing costs due to help from family members or other resources. The median student household income of a student that attends the University of Michigan is \$154,000, while the average American household's median income is \$67,521.

Therefore, when apartment complexes located close to campus like Foundry Lofts, The Hub and The Varsity begin charging more than one thousand dollars per occupant in a unit, it's no shock that other complexes in Ann Arbor have started following suit. According to PayScale, housing costs in Ann Arbor are 16% higher than the national average. In 2023, the

average Ann Arbor apartment is predicted to cost between \$1,368 and \$1,917 per apartment. With 47,659 students currently enrolled as either an undergraduate or graduate student at the University, there is demand for housing that needs to be met. And as recalled before, the average U-M student has the means to meet prices put in place by landlords. However, where does this leave low-income and/or unhoused residents of Ann Arbor not associated with the University? And how do they manage to survive in a town built to cater to those who come from an upper-class society?

According to the Washtenaw Housing Alliance, in 2020, 2,800 individuals experienced homelessness or sought emergency housing. More recently, at the end of 2022, the demand for a place in Ann Arbor homeless shelters rose by 30%.

During my time as a student, I've noticed the housing crisis gets worse on everyday walks down State Street as the population of unhoused people continuously grows. There is a common misconception that those who face housing insecurity or financial troubles misuse their money or "don't spend it on the right things." (Who are we as a society to police the way people choose to spend their money? Unhoused persons may struggle with addiction and when medical resources are unavailable, treatment for substance abuse is unattainable.) However, research shows that the average person is only one or two paychecks away from experiencing homelessness. In general, society holds extremely negative perceptions of people in poverty experiencing homelessness. It often leads to the dehumanization and criminalization of the homeless population.

Unhoused persons are more likely to

be subjected to violent crimes, harassment and public degradation. There are rules present in cities across Michigan prohibiting sleeping, receiving free food or loitering, all activities unhoused persons engage in to survive. In Ann Arbor, the Michigan State Police once threatened to evict residents of Camp Take Notice, a tent community that provides food and shelter to individuals in need. The policies established to erase Ann Arbor's homelessness crisis continue to isolate homeless persons, restrict them from receiving help and further perpetuate the idea that an individual's actions are what got them to that place. It fails to acknowledge other non-controllable and systemic circumstances that can cause someone to become homeless.

Furthermore, people tend to look away when they see a homeless person on State Street. For some reason, they have this elaborate fantasy that they'll be singled out by an unhoused person,

where they will then be forced to offer money. When the people of Ann Arbor turn a blind eye to the town's homeless population, it denies their experience, ignores the realities of the Ann Arbor housing crisis and further alienates unhoused persons from society.

Extending a hand or simply smiling at someone is an act of kindness that's often forgotten about. Walking past someone asking for food or money in front of our local Target or Starbucks is a form of dehumanization that U-M students actively participate in every single day. As another student, I understand that sometimes we can be trapped in our own world with tunnel vision, focused on being on time to the next class or meeting. However, when you consciously put in your AirPods, fake a phone call with an imaginary friend or decide to cross the street early before you are approached by a homeless person, it becomes clear that they are not seen as a person in your eyes as they become invisible to you.



**120 E. Washington St. Ann Arbor, MI**  
**734-327-9239**

➔ **HOSTILE** from page 7

around Central Campus — South University, State Street, downtown — you'll undoubtedly question why so much of this city is under construction. Sites and advertisements promise new luxury high-rises taking up even more space in this city in the midst of such little access to affordable housing. This architecture is Ann Arbor's most hostile action against the unhoused and the rest of the city's population. To their credit, our local government is attempting to restrict the construction of even more exorbitantly expensive housing — student or otherwise — and has granted funds for a more affordable housing development explicitly targeted for individuals leaving their unhoused status. However, these steps taken don't mean we shouldn't hold our city accountable for their actions. When aiding the unhoused with its millions of dollars in federal funding remains Ann Arbor's lowest priority, when money and time is wasted on construction that hurts local businesses and police manpower is used to sweep shelters for the unhoused, it's clear that our city's attitude toward the unhoused has thus far been less than understanding.

We can acknowledge and thank those who are as hospitable as we should be, like the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County's Robert J Delonis Center in Ann Arbor. The unaddressed status of unhoused individuals in our city is a failure on our city's part in housing issues, and their efforts need to be *for* the unhoused — rather than a bar dividing a bench.

➔ **DJ CHOPPER** from page 7

prank that was pulled on him in school. He also stated he was looking for a wife, not a playgirl to break his heart. How he wanted to love one woman and have children in the future.

DJ Head assumed that he had embarrassed Chopper, asking about his birthmark on the radio, and that the women would not like him or bid on him due to his birthmark. The holiday was quickly approaching. Four days before the auction, Chopper got off work and went to his car in the parking lot.

He could not believe his eyes — his car was covered in Valentine's Day cards, even the roof. There was a large card signed by fans and a red bow sitting on the hood, surrounded by other pink, purple and red cards. He gathered all the cards, planning to read them once he got home, where he fixed his dinner and put on the TV.

To his amazement they were talking about the upcoming auction on the news. Just then, he remembered the cards and retrieved them from his car to read them. Reading the first three cards, he was flattered and blushing — feeling something he had not felt in all his life. The next day at work Head started in on him again, not knowing about the cards. Chopper began his morning shift thanking all the people who gave him a card. He then admitted that he had given up on Valentine's Day until he received all the cards, and he was looking forward to the auction.


The morning of the auction arrived too soon. Chopper was thinking, who would bid for him,

the man with the birthmark? He never expected anyone to bid on him, but he was getting more bids than DJ Head. Then all of a sudden one person placed a bid for him that was five times the previous amount, totaling \$3,000.

He could not see through the crowd, wondering who bid all that money for him. Standing on the stage waiting, finally he could see it was Daphne Pager from his science class. He had not stayed in touch with her, assuming she did not care for him. He was relieved it was Daphne, the woman he had a crush on in college and he felt comfortable talking with.

During the date she asked Chopper why he never called her after graduation. He replied that he did not think she cared for him and was embarrassed to be seen with him. She placed her hand over his hand and explained to him it's not about looks; it's the love you have in your heart and share. Chopper knew he had found his wife, his Valentine for life. Love finally blossomed that year. From that day, they never separated, getting married the following year on Valentine's Day.

**The Blessings, published January 13, was based on a true story, however the names and places were changed to protect the families.**





**APPLICATIONS FOR YOUNG ADULTS ARE NOW OPEN!**

SummerWorks is a 10-week, paid summer professional development, employment, and mentorship program for young adults in Washtenaw County (ages 16-24).

Deadline for youth application: March 12th

**Work. (L)earn. Thrive. Invest in YOU!**

- This program provides the opportunity to
  - Network with local professionals
  - Explore career opportunities and new industries
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**What are you signing up for?**

- You may be selected for a **PAID Summer Internship**, which means
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"One of the biggest benefits to participating in SummerWorks has been the opportunity to gain experience in a more professional environment"

- Anastasia Frederick  
SummerWorks Young Adult

.....

"SummerWorks helped me to gain access to jobs that I otherwise wouldn't have found on my own",

- Chinedum Wejinya  
SummerWorks Young Adult



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- Grow the future workforce**
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- Meet your business needs**
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- Invest in our community**
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**Ways to Participate in SummerWorks**

- Host an Intern**
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- Be a Mentor**
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- Give a Career Talk**
  - Build awareness for your field and organization with a one hour virtual presentation



For more information, including how to apply:

SummerWorks.info

mail@summerworks.info



# Peanut butter fudge

**CHRIS FIELDS**

Groundcover contributor

## Ingredients:

½ cup butter or margarine  
½ cup brown sugar  
1 16 oz jar peanut butter  
2 cups powdered sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
Desired toppings (nuts, chocolate chips, dried date pieces)

## Directions:

Combine butter and brown sugar in a medium saucepan and stir over low heat until mixture begins to bubble around the edges.

Remove from heat and stir in peanut butter and vanilla extract. Sift in powdered sugar one cup at a time, stirring



until smooth.

Pour mixture into a round or square baking dish lined with foil (8 inch cake pan works well) and press toppings into the top. Chill until hard.

Slice into cubes and serve at room temperature!

## ➡ EDUCATION from page 8

music heard throughout the world. Get-Cha-Mind Right Crew Music is on music platforms now.

My other passion is to express myself through writing. I like writing rap songs and love songs and things I experience in my lifetime. I also find it necessary to express or write about issues that concern me. For example, I wrote an article on the "Gentrification of Ann Arbor" in the Nov. 1, 2022 issue of Groundcover News. I got a great response and encourage all to check out that article. I am truly happy to have found my passion and purpose in music and writing.

The saga continues and the beat goes on. I plan to take one or two classes a semester and prioritize my time in order to get school assignments done. I am confident that things will work out

and I will successfully accomplish my goals. I'm finishing up my second week of class and things are going well. I like my instructor and there are good vibes overall.

Meeting new people and getting back into schooling is exciting; I'm looking forward to getting involved in different student activities. I have reached out to the school radio station and have been trained to host my own show. Sometime soon I'll be hosting my own show on the school's station, Orchard Radio. I'm also looking to get involved with the WCC newspaper, The Washtenaw Voice.

Even though I struggled with schooling throughout my life, I feel encouraged. I know if I just take my time and put my school work first, I believe I can obtain a degree in journalism and a music production and audio engineer certificate.



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Bethlehem Church is home of the Groundcover office



## FEBRUARY 2023 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM

Ash Wednesday, February 22 – Distribution of Ashes at 7:30 pm

Please visit the church website at: [bethlehem-ucc.org](http://bethlehem-ucc.org) for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.



## Sunday Worship Time

10:00 am In-person  
and via Live Stream and  
Radio Broadcast